



A project of NOFA-VT and Shelburne Farms

- **MEMORANDUM** -

TO: House Agriculture, Food Resiliency & Forestry Committee

FR: Betsy Rosenbluth, Helen Rortvedt, VT FEED

RE: VT Local Food Incentive

DA: February 22, 2023

Thank you so much for your interest and commitment to creating access for every Vermont student to farm fresh school meals! We appreciate your thoughtful questions and consideration of h165 and the Local Foods Incentive (LFI) for schools.

We are encouraged by the interest and participation in the LFI program by 31 of the 51 School Food Authorities in just these first 2 years and are confident that more schools will be qualifying in the future. VT FEED will continue our outreach and technical assistance to any and all schools looking for support to help them qualify for these incentive grants. We have excellent working partnerships with the Agencies of Education and Agriculture so that together we can streamline the administration of the program as best we can for both the school nutrition programs and Agency staff. Most school nutrition directors want to buy from VT farmers and the incentive is supporting them by increasing the funds they have available.

We strongly recommend you pass h165 without changes to the Local Foods Incentive program. We are happy to continue the discussion with your Committee to share our background research and intentions, as well as what we are learning through implementation of the program here in VT and in other states. We are documenting and responding to a variety of circumstances (i.e. cross border purchasing, processing capacity) that we will want to discuss with your Committee in the future, as our experience grows.

Funding for the Local Food Incentives program was *not* included in the Governor's recommended FY 24 budget, and we hope that this Committee will recommend \$500,000 in base funding for the program in your budget memo so that schools can count on the incentive to support their purchasing of Vermont foods.